

# Maurice Hinchey NEWS

## 26<sup>TH</sup> CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT, NEW YORK

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### HINCHEY, HOUGHTON URGE PROTECTION OF FINGER LAKES NATIONAL FOREST

WASHINGTON - U.S. Representatives Maurice Hinchey (NY-26) and Amo Houghton (NY-31) today were joined by a bipartisan group of their upstate colleagues in urging the House to adopt Senate-passed language prohibiting oil and gas drilling in the Finger Lakes National Forest (FLNF). Seven upstate New York members of the House of Representatives made their request in a letter that was sent to the chairman and the ranking member of the Energy and Water Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee.

"The Finger Lakes National Forest is the only National Forest in New York," said Hinchey. "It is enjoyed by tens of thousands of visitors each year. Drilling would have a permanent adverse impact on this precious resource and we cannot allow it to happen."

"I am against a program to explore for oil and gas in the Finger Lakes area - and the reason is pretty straightforward," said Houghton. "I am doing everything possible to protect the special character of the 31<sup>st</sup> District, so absent a national energy emergency requiring exploration in every part of the country, my sense is that we need to keep this area intact and not despoil it."

The FLNF was established by an Act of Congress in 1983 and has since become a popular destination for hikers, campers, horseback riders, and nature enthusiasts. It is also used for hunting, fishing, skiing and snowmobiling in the colder months. The U.S. Forest Service is currently proposing leasing 13,000 of the FLNF's 16,000 acres for oil and natural gas drilling. The Senate Energy and Water Appropriations bill includes a provision prohibiting this drilling. The letter sent today urges the House to retain the Senate language during the conference that will resolve the differences between the House and Senate versions of the bill.

In addition to Hinchey and Houghton, the letter is signed by Representatives Louise Slaughter (NY-28), James Walsh (NY-25), Michael McNulty (NY-21), Sherwood Boehlert (NY-23) and John McHugh (NY-24).